

**Amendments to the Specification:**

Please replace the paragraph on Pg. 6, ll. 20-25 with the following paragraph:

Located between the first angled surface 44 and the second angled surface 46 is a root surface 45. The root surface 45 of the locking thread 41 includes a root diameter. The root surface 45 is at an angle 47 with respect to an imaginary horizontal line A running along the axis of the shaft 20. Preferably, the angle 47 is between 4° and 8°. The root surface 45 has a width that is greater than that found in a conventional thread and is configured so that the locking thread 41 converges to the head 56.

Please replace the paragraph on Pg. 6, ll. 26-31 with the following paragraph:

The locking thread 41 is configured to cooperate with the threads 64 of a nut body 52, also referred to herein as a female threaded member. As the nut body 52 is torqued onto the shaft 20, the root surfaces 45 within the locking threads 41 exert a force on the threads 64 of the nut body 52. As depicted in FIG. 4, in cases where the threads 64 of the nut body 52 include a metal, the root surface 45 exerts a force upon the thread 64 of the nut body 52 so that the metal flows upward on a flank 48 of the thread 64.

Please replace the paragraph on Pg. 7, ll. 7-12 with the following paragraph:

As depicted in FIG. 4, a plurality of Vee-shaped threads 44, also referred to herein as conventional threads, are located adjacent to the plurality of locking threads 41 and provided with a thread root 129. The Vee-shaped threads 44 include a root diameter and a crest diameter. As depicted in FIG. 2, the root diameter of the locking thread 41 is greater than the root diameter of the Vee-shaped threads 44. A cross-sectional view of a plurality of Vee-shaped threads 42 is depicted in greater detail in FIG. 8. As shown therein, a Vee-shaped thread 42 is provided with a first side 50 and a second side 51. The sides 50, 51 abut one another and are configured to form a Vee shape. The first side 50 is at an angle with respect to the second side 51, preferably ranging between 30° and 90°.

Please replace the paragraph on Pg. 7, ll. 13-18 with the following paragraph:

FIG. 4 further depicts a plurality of curved threads 43 located adjacent to the Vee-shaped threads 42. In this application, the term curved threads 43 is also referred to herein as guide threads. FIG. 9 depicts a cross-sectional view of a plurality of curved threads 43 in greater detail. According to one aspect of the present invention, the curved threads 43 are configured to prevent cross-threading. According to another aspect of the present invention, the curved threads 43 are configured to orient the threads 64 of a nut body 52 so that the threads 64 align with the threaded surface 40 on the shaft 20.

Please replace the paragraph on Pg. 7, ll. 25-31 with the following paragraph:

FIG. 11 depicts a cross-sectional view of an alternative threaded surface 40. As shown therein, the threaded surface 40 includes a plurality of guide threads 53. The guide threads 53 include a crest diameter. As illustrated in FIG. 4 and FIG. 11, the guide threads 43, 53, 63, differ from the conventional threads on the shaft 20 in that the conventional threads are provided with a crest diameter (referred to herein as a "first crest diameter") that is, at least in part, greater than a crest diameter of the guide threads (referred to herein as a "second crest diameter"). According to one aspect of the present invention, the guide threads 53 are configured to prevent cross-threading. According to another aspect, the guide threads 53 are configured to orient the threads 64 of a nut body 52 so that the threads 64 align with the threaded surface 40 on the shaft 20. As shown in FIG. 9, the guide threads 53 are located at an end of the shaft 20 and are provided with a reduced diameter relative to the Vee-shaped threads 42. In this application, the term "guide means" refers to threads on a shaft 20 that have a crest diameter that is, at least in part, less than the crest diameter of the conventional thread on the shaft 20. Guide means encompasses structures on a shaft 20 that generally align the threads of the shaft 20 with those of a female threaded member.

Please replace the paragraph on Pg. 8, ll. 1-6 with the following paragraph:

A plurality of plateau threads 63 are located adjacent to the guide threads 53. In this application, the term plateau threads 63 is also referred to herein as guide threads. As depicted in FIG. 11, the plateau threads 63 are provided with a plurality of plateaus 55. The plateaus 55 are shaped to prevent cross-threading and to orient the nut body so that the threads 64 align with the threaded surface 40 on the shaft 20. In the embodiment depicted in FIG. 11, the plateaus 55 are conically or frusto-conically shaped, preferably to provide a ramped cross-sectional profile.

Please insert the following paragraph on Pg. 24, ll.24:

Referring now to Figure 40, the shaft 10 is provided with an axis 123, a first shaft element 124, and a second shaft element 125. The first shaft element 124 includes a first outer surface 126 and a radius 127. The radius 127 extends from the axis 123 of the shaft 10 to the first outer surface 126. The second shaft element 128 is provided with a locking thread 41 that includes a root surface 45. The distance between the axis 123 and the root surface 45 of the second shaft element 128 is greater than the radius 127 of the first shaft element 124.